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CEREBUS

GUYS

no.14

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214
JAN

EXCERPT

I know only a little about stealing pictures but the funniest one I know was a flyer named Whitey Dahl. He was a very good flyer and he came to me one day and said, "Mister Ernest, I'd like you to give me an opinion."

"Sure," I said.

"Is Van Dick a good painter?" He pronounced it that way.

"Very good painter, Whitey. Well thought of."

"What would a good Van Dick be worth?"

"I can't tell you Whitey exactly. I'd have to find out. But it would be worth a considerable sum of money."

"Well I'm certainly glad to hear that," Whitey said. "I'm glad to know my judgment is good. I picked up that old Van Dick when we were first out at the castle and I carry it with me everywhere and it hangs over my bed. I love that old Van Dick and I'm certainly glad to hear you confirm that I have good taste."

It is a shame Whitey never got in touch with Sir Joseph. Whitey promised me he would turn in the picture after the war. But he got shot down instead and captured and sentenced to death in Salamanca. He got out finally. But I don't know who has the picture. All the Prado pictures were taken good care of and none of them was damaged. I was always very proud of how the Republic took care of pictures. I remember a column of trucks going by (with) the Prado pictures on the road from Valencia to Barcelona the day the Franco people cut the road and reached the sea. What was left of one company was holding up the column that was trying to cut the road. Messersmidts and Fiat's were circling round and round strafing and I was praying for the pictures. That was the worst time they had. After that they went straight on to Switzerland and later were all returned. I guess it was wrong to take the chance of evacuating them by road. But nobody knew what would happen in Valencia and plenty of people got killed who could have been pulled out in the rear guard action that held the road open until they were all safely out. During the fascist bombing and shelling of Madrid the slogan was for the people who could not read and write, "Respect anything you do not understand. It may be a work of art."

Seems like a pretty good slogan for any time.

CEREBUS
NO. 214 JANUARY 1997

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GUYS
a novel
•
(Cerebus 201 to Cerebus 219)

MONTHLY
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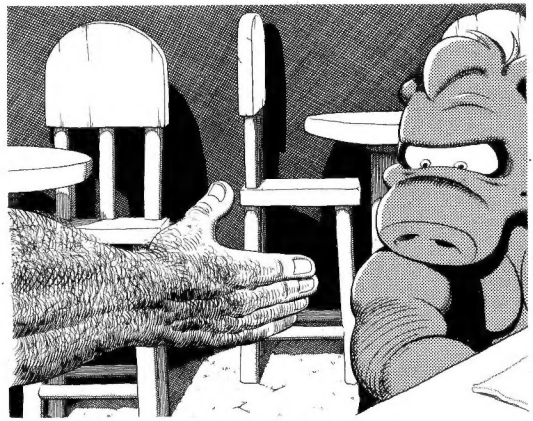
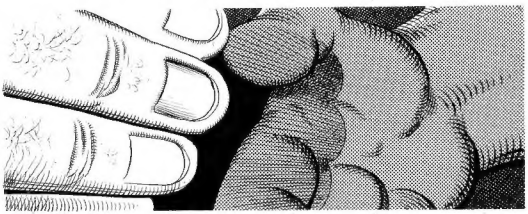
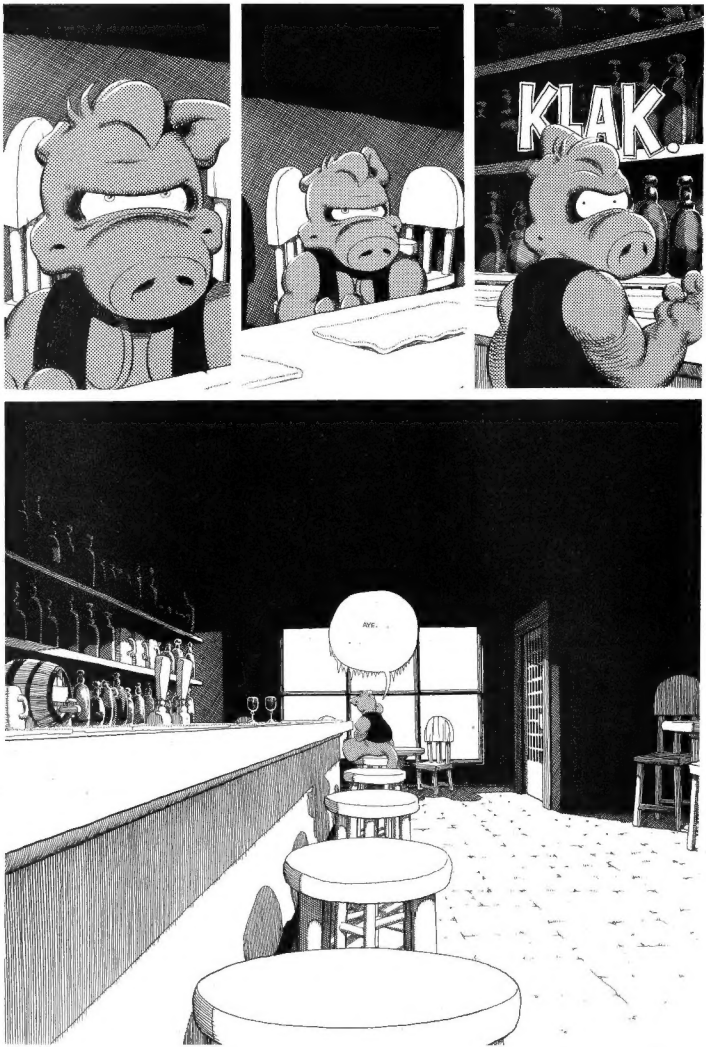
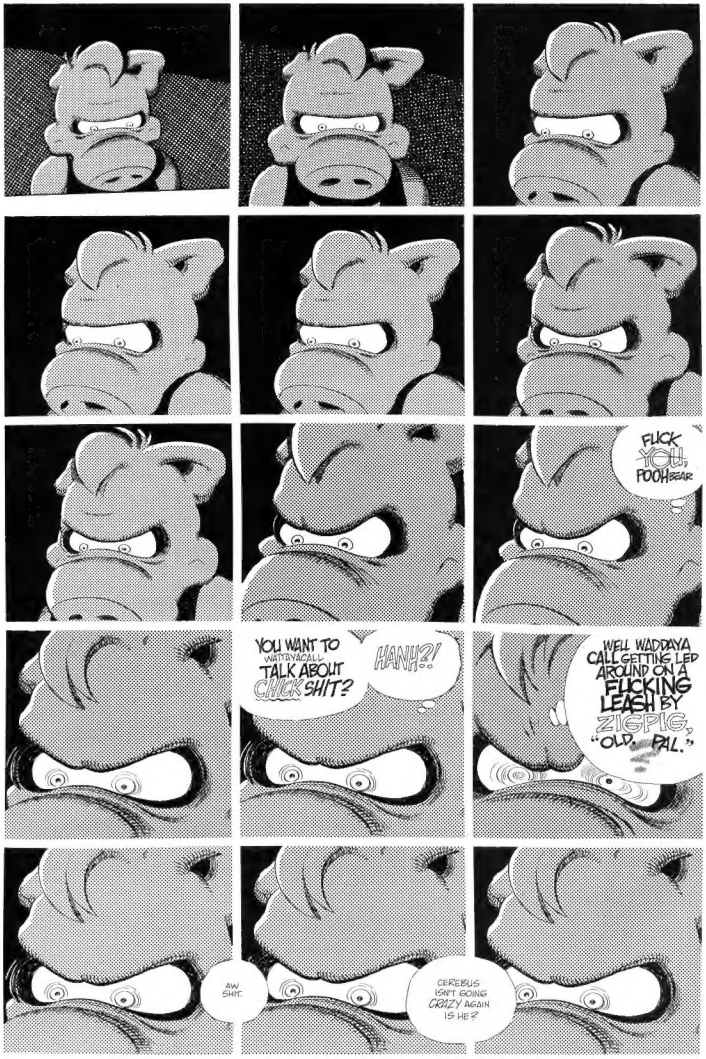


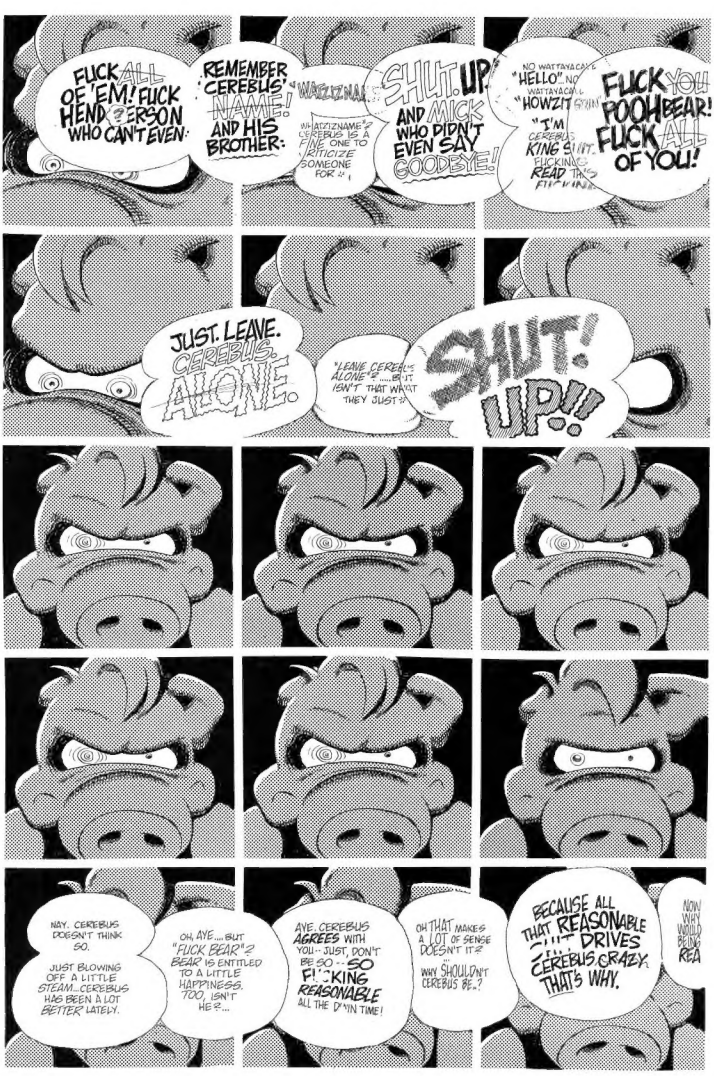


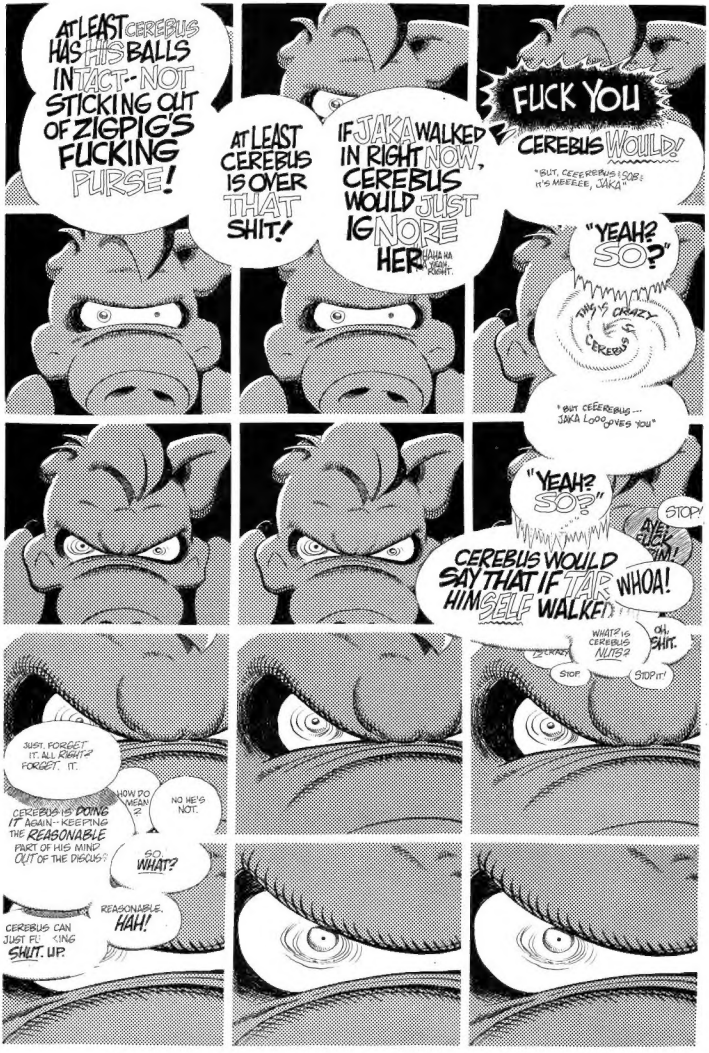
NOW, WHERE WUZ I...
OH YEAH!
IT WUZ WARTTAYACALL REALLY, REALLY GREAT SEEING YOU AGAIN....
AN' I REALLY WADDAYACALL
MEAN THAT.
AYE! CEREBUS TOO!
GREAT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
YEAH?
GREATGREATGREAT!

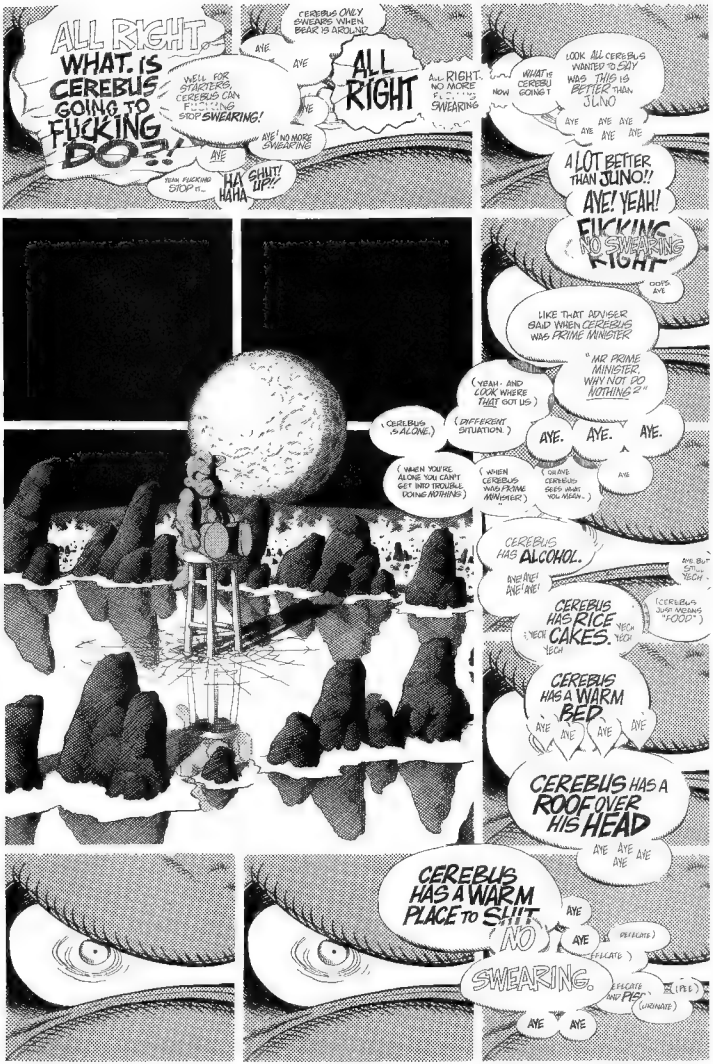
GEE!
THANKS.
YOU'RE WELCOME
KLIK...
KLAK.
HEY.
YOU WATTAVACALL TAKE GOOD CARE O' YERSELF, HUH?

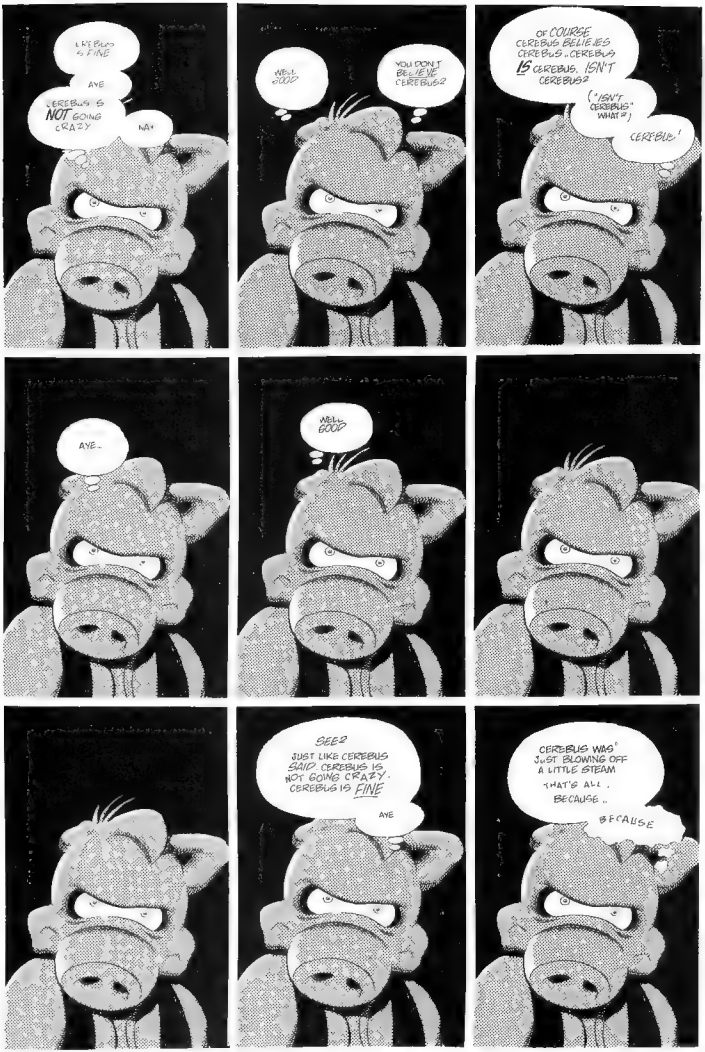

KLAK.
AYE.

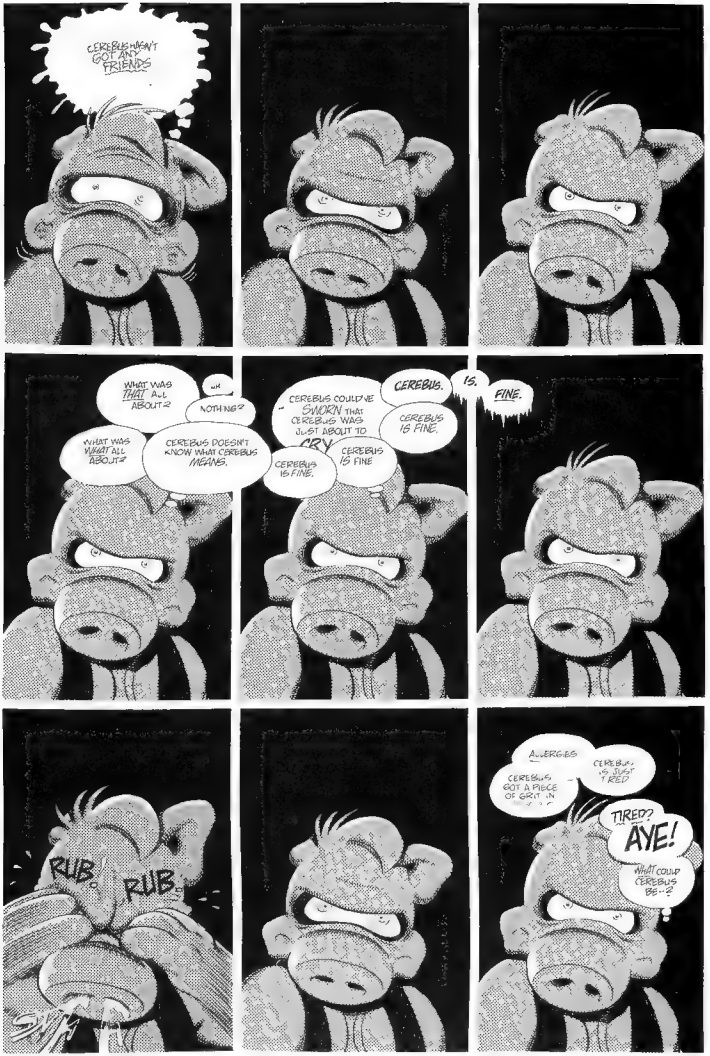

FUCK YOU, POOHBEAR
YOU WANT TO METAPHORICALLY TALK ABOUT CHICK SHIT?
HANH?!
WELL WADDAYA CALL GETTING LED AROUND ON A FUCKING LEASH BY ZIGPIG, "OLD PAL."
AW SHIT
CEREBUS ISN'T GOING CRAZY AGAIN IS HE?

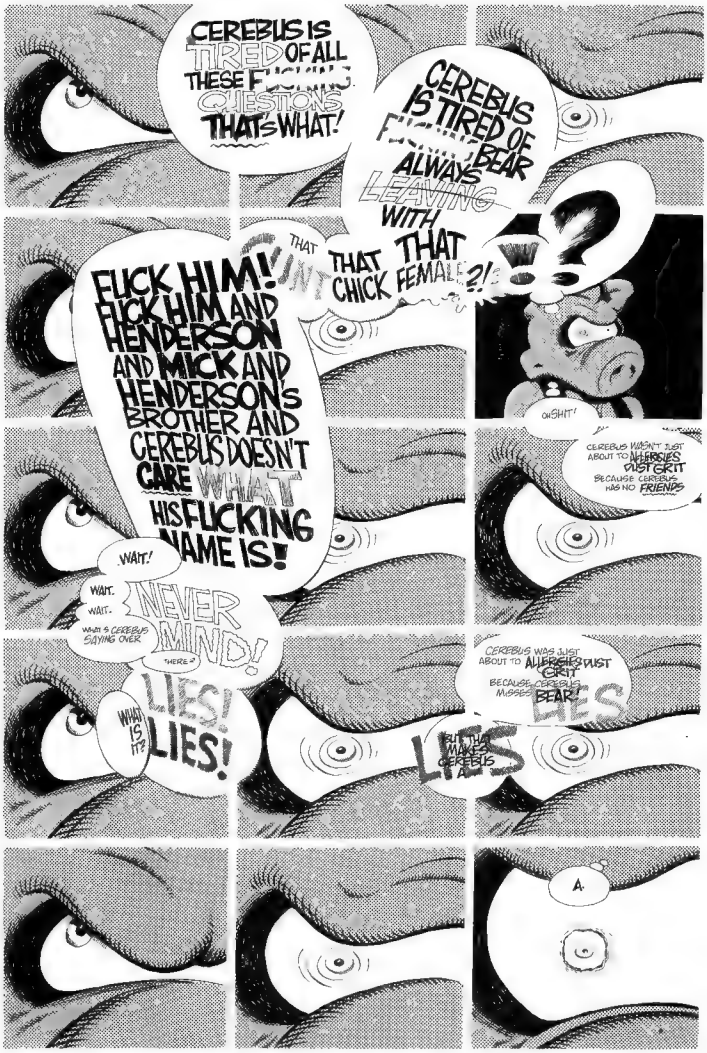

FUCK ALL OF 'EM! FUCK HEND?ERSON WHO CAN'T EVEN.
REMEMBER CEREBUS' NAME! AND HIS BROTHER:
WAZZIZNAME
WHATDIZNAME'S CEREBUS IS A FINE ONE TO CRITICIZE SOMEONE FOR...!
SHUT UP! AND MICK WHO DIDN'T EVEN SAY GOODBYE!
NO WATTAYACAN'S "HELLO" NO WATTAYACAN'L "HOWZIT SPIN"
"I'M CEREBUS KING SHIT FUCKING READ THIS FUCKING
FUCK YOU POOH BEAR! FUCK ALL OF YOU!
JUST. LEAVE. CEREBUS. ALONE.
"LEAVE CEREBUS ALONE" ...BY IT ISN'T THAT WHAT THEY JUST SAID?
SHUT! UP!!
NAY. CEREBUS DOESN'T THINK SO.
JUST BLOWING OFF A LITTLE STEAM...CEREBUS HAS BEEN A LOT BETTER LATELY.
OH AYE ... BUT "FUCK BEAR"? BEAR IS ENTITLED TO A LITTLE HAPPINESS, TOO, ISN'T HE?...
AYE. CEREBUS AGREES WITH YOU-- JUST, DON'T BE SO --SO FI'KING REASONABLE ALL THE D*IN TIME!
OH THAT MAKES A LOT OF SENSE DOESN'T IT?
WHY SHOULDN'T CEREBUS BE..?
BECAUSE ALL THAT REASONABLE ...!!!* DRIVES CEREBUS CRAZY. THAT'S WHY.
NOW WHY WOULD BEING REA

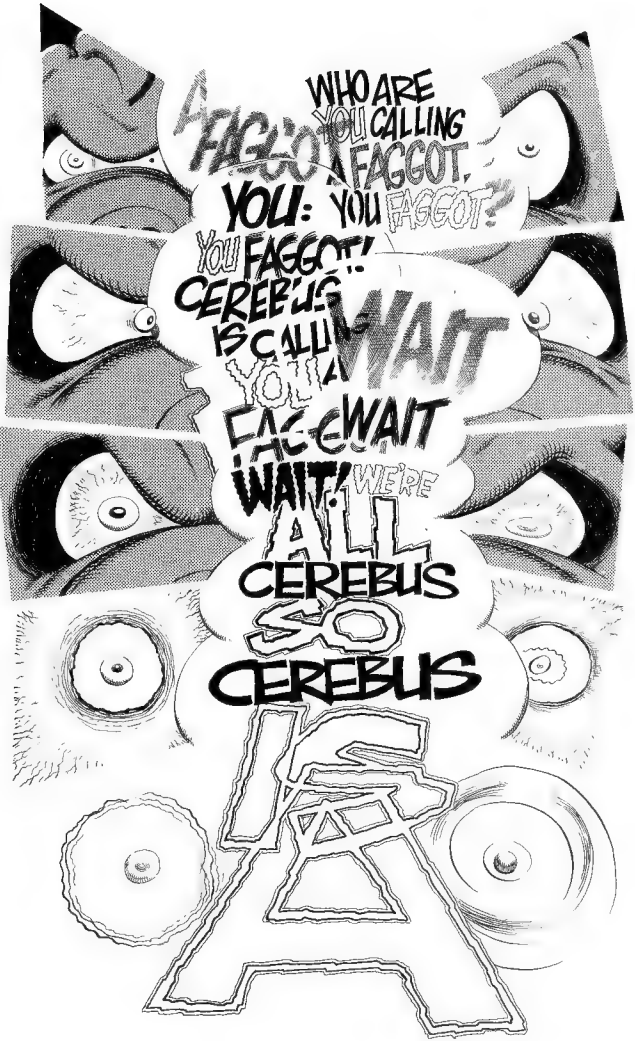

AT LEAST CEREBUS HAS HIS BALLS IN TACT-- NOT STICKING OUT OF ZIGPIG'S FUCKING PURSE!
AT LEAST CEREBUS IS OVER THAT SHIT!
IF JAKA WALKED IN RIGHT NOW, CEREBUS WOULD JUST IGNORE HER
HAHA HA YEAH, RIGHT.
FUCK YOU
CEREBUS WOULD!
"BUT, CEEREBUS! SOB: IT'S MEEEEE, JAKA"
"YEAH? SO?"
THIS'S CRAZY
CEREBUS
"BUT CEEREBUS... JAKA LOOOVES YOU"
"YEAH? SO?"
STOP!
CEREBUS WOULD SAY THAT IF TARHIMSELF WALKED!
WHOA!
WHAT? IS CEREBUS NUTS?
OH, SHIT.
STOP
STOP IT!
JUST. FORGET IT. ALL RIGHT? FORGET. IT.
HOW DO MEAN ?
NO HE'S NOT.
CEREBUS IS DOING IT AGAIN - KEEPING THE REASONABLE PART OF HIS MIND OUT OF THE DISCUS?
SO WHAT?
REASONABLE. HAH!
CEREBUS CAN JUST FU KING SHUT UP.


ALL RIGHT.
WHAT. IS CEREBUS GOING TO FUCKING DO?!
WELL FOR STARTERS, CEREBUS CAN F*CKING STOP SWEARING!
TEAH FUCKING STOP IT...
AYE
AYE
AYE
AYE
HA HAHA
SHUT UP!!
AYE! NO MORE SWEARING
CEREBUS ONLY SWEARS WHEN BEAR IS AROUND
ALL RIGHT
ALL RIGHT. NO MORE F*CKING SWEARING
WHAT'S CEREBUS GOING?
NOW
LOOK. ALL CEREBUS WANTED TO SAY WAS THIS IS BETTER THAN JUNO
AYE AYE AYE AYE AYE AYE
A LOT BETTER THAN JUNO!!
AYE! YEAH!
FUCKING NO SWEARING RIGHT
(CEREBUS IS ALONE.)
(WHEN YOU'RE ALONE YOU CAN'T GET INTO TROUBLE DOING NOTHING)
(WHEN CEREBUS WAS PRIME MINISTER)
(YEAH - AND LOOK WHERE THAT GOT US)
(DIFFERENT SITUATION.)
LIKE THAT ADVISER SAID WHEN CEREBUS WAS PRIME MINISTER
"MR PRIME MINISTER, WHY NOT DO NOTHING?"
AYE.
AYE.
AYE.
AYE
(CAN'T CEREBUS SEE'S WHAT YOU MEAN.)
CEREBUS HAS ALCOHOL.
AYE AYE! AYE! AYE!
AYE BUT STILL YECH
CEREBUS HAS RICE CAKES.
YECH
YECH
YECH
(CEREBUS JUST MEANS "FOOD")
CEREBUS HAS A WARM BED
AYE
AYE
AYE
AYE
CEREBUS HAS A ROOF OVER HIS HEAD
AYE AYE AYE AYE
CEREBUS HAS A WARM PLACE TO SHIT.
NO
SWEARING.
AYE
AYE
(DEFECATE)
(DEFECATE)
(DEFECATE AND PEE)
(URINATE)
AYE
AYE


CEREBUS IS FINE
AYE
CEREBUS IS NOT GOING CRAZY
NAY
WELL GOOD
YOU DON'T BELIEVE CEREBUS?
OF COURSE CEREBUS BELIEVES CEREBUS. CEREBUS IS CEREBUS, ISN'T CEREBUS?
("ISN'T CEREBUS" WHAT?)
CEREBUS!
AYE.
WELL GOOD
SEE?
JUST LIKE CEREBUS SAID! CEREBUS IS NOT GOING CRAZY. CEREBUS IS FINE
AYE
CEREBUS WAS JUST BLOWING OFF A LITTLE STEAM
THAT'S ALL.
BECAUSE..
BECAUSE

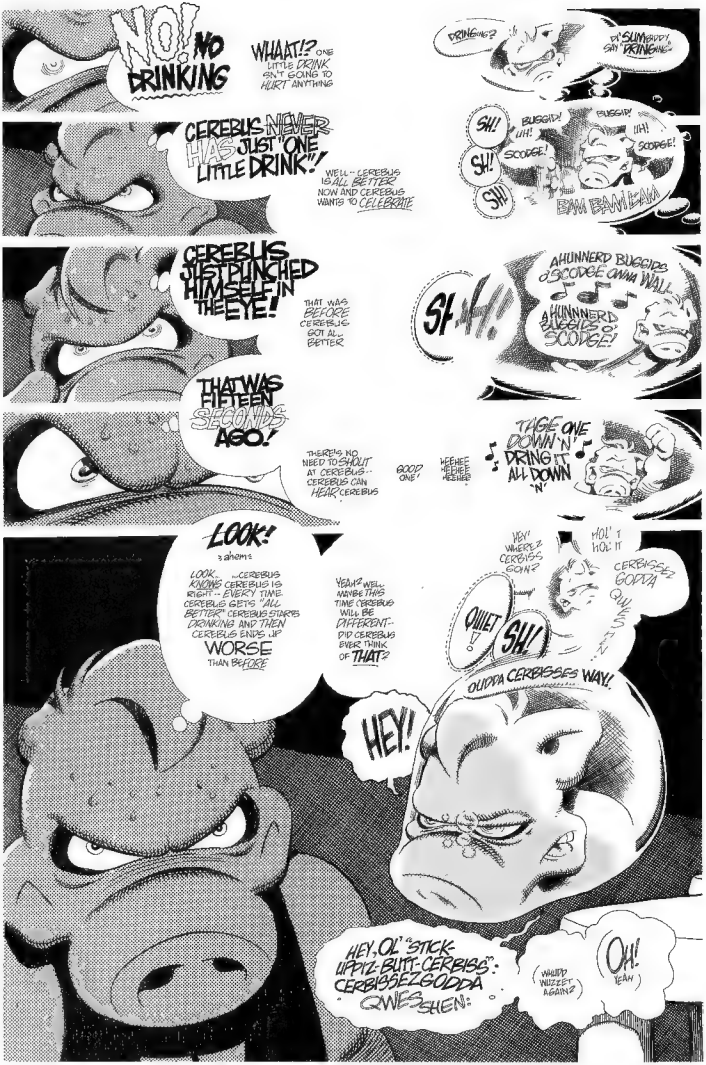

CEREBUS HASN'T GOT ANY FRIENDS
WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?
NOTHING?
WHAT WAS WHAT ALL ABOUT?
CEREBUS DOESN'T KNOW WHAT CEREBUS MEANS.
CEREBUS IS FINE.
CEREBUS COULD'VE SWORN THAT CEREBUS WAS JUST ABOUT TO CRY
CEREBUS IS FINE
CEREBUS IS FINE.
CEREBUS.
IS.
FINE.
RUB.
RUB.
ALLERGIES
CEREBUS GOT A PIECE OF GRIT IN HER EYE
CEREBUS IS JUST TIRED
TIRED?
AYE!
WHAT COULD CEREBUS BE?


CEREBUS IS TIRED OF ALL THESE F CHESTIONS THAT'S WHAT!
CEREBUS IS TIRED OF BEAR ALWAYS LEAVING WITH THAT CHICK
THAT FEMALE?!
FUCK HIM! FUCK HIM AND HENDERSON AND MICK AND HENDERSON'S BROTHER AND CEREBUS DOESN'T CARE WHAT HIS FUCKING NAME IS!
OHSHIT!
CEREBUS WASN'T JUST ABOUT TO ALLERGIES DUST GRIT BECAUSE CEREBUS HAS NO FRIENDS
WAIT!
WAIT.
WAIT.
WAIT! CEREBUS SAYING OVER
NEVER MIND!
THERE!
WHAT IS IT?
LIES! LIES!
CEREBUS WAS JUST ABOUT TO ALLERGIES DUST GRIT BECAUSE CEREBUS MISSES BEAR!
LIES
BUT THAT MAKES CEREBUS A
LIES
A


FAGGOT
WHO ARE YOU CALLING FAGGOT, YOU FAGGOT?
YOU: YOU FAGGOT!
YOU FAGGOT!
CEREBUS IS CALLING YOU A FAG
WAIT
WAIT
WAIT! WE'RE ALL CEREBUS
SO
CEREBUS
A

SMAK
OKAY
CEREBUS JUST PUNCHED CEREBUS IN THE EYE
NOW THAT.
IS CRAZY
CEREBUS STARTED IT! CEREBUS CALLED CEREBUS A--
SHUT! UP!!
NOW LISTEN
AYE
AYE
AYE
AYE
IT IS LIKE DAVE SAID
FUCK DAVE! SHUT UP!
CEREBUS, LIFE IS THE BAKER AND CEREBUS IS THE BREAD
AYE
AYE
AYE
AYE

NOW!
IS THERE ANY PART OF CEREBUS THAT WANTS TO BE A FAGGOT?
NAY! NAY! NAY!
NAY?
UM
AHEM HRMPH HUMPH
NAY!
AND NOW THAT THAT'S SETTLED
CEREBUS' ONE TWO' ONE TWO'
HUNG-
HEY! WHERE'S CEREBUS GOING?!
CEREBUS DOESN'T KNOW WHAT CLUB PUSH MEANS
CEREBUS VS. JUST STRETCHING HIS LEGS
TIME FOR A DRINK!
ONE TWO' ONE TWO'
WHAT AN INTERESTING WINDOW!
TIME FOR A WHAT?
IT'S A TREE
CLUB PUSH "AGAIN" HE DOESN'T KNOW CLUB PUSH EITHER
STRETCH STRETCH
STRETCH THE LEGS


NO! NO DRINKING
WHAAT!? ONE LITTLE DRINK AIN'T GOING TO HURT ANYTHING
DRINKING?
OI' SLIMEBODDY, AIN'T DRINKING
CEREBUS NEVER HAS JUST ONE LITTLE DRINK!!
WELL... CEREBUS IS ALL BETTER NOW AND CEREBUS WANTS TO CELEBRATE
SH!
SH!
SH!
BUGGIN'
UH!
SCOOGE!
BUGGIN'
UH!
SCOOGE!
BAM BAM BAM
CEREBUS JUST PUNCHED HIMSELF IN THE EYE!
THAT WAS BEFORE CEREBUS GOT ALL BETTER
SHHH!
AHUNNERD BUGGIES O' SCOOGE OWNA WALL
A HUNNERD BUGGIES O' SCOOGE!
THAT WAS FIFTEEN SECONDS AGO.
THERE'S NO NEED TO SHOUT AT CEREBUS... CEREBUS CAN HEAR CEREBUS
GOOD ONE!
HEEHEE HEEHEE HEEHEE
TAGIE ONE DOWN 'N' DRING IT ALL DOWN 'N'
LOOK!
3 ahems
LOOK... ...CEREBUS KNOWS CEREBUS IS RIGHT -- EVERY TIME. CEREBUS GETS "ALL BETTER" CEREBUS STARTS DRINKING AND THEN CEREBUS ENDS UP WORSE THAN BEFORE
YEAH? WELL, MAYBE THIS TIME CEREBUS WILL BE DIFFERENT-- DID CEREBUS EVER THINK OF THAT?
HEY! WHERDJ CERBISS GOIN'?
HOL' I HOL' IT
CERBISSES GODDA QUESTION
QUIET!
SH!
OUDDA CERBISSES WAY!
HEY!
HEY, OL' "STICK-UPPITZ-BUTT-CERBISS": CERBISSES GODDA QUESTION:
(WHUDD WUZZAT AGAIN?)
OH! (CAN)

IF IZ
EGZACKLY CERBISS IZ GOYNA DO?
EA FUGGIN ALL DAY?
HE'S RIGHT
NO HE'S NOT RIGHT!
OKAY... TU THINGS
THINK!
CERBERUS CAN'T THINK WITH ALL THESE VOICES!
CERBERUS NEEDS TO RELAX..
SCOTCH
HEY! CERBISS AKST YOU A QWESHEN
HIC
DOINK DOINK DOINK
NO! CERBERUS IS RIGHT! CERBERUS NEVER HAS JUST A LITTLE SCOTCH
ELSE CERBERUS GONG TO DO?
CAN'T THINK WITH ALL THESE VOICES
NEEDS TO RELAX
A SCOTCH
KLIK KLAK
GOOT AWAKNING MY DEAH..

I HEV SOME SPUHLENDID NYEWS FAH YOU..
WOULD YOU EXCUSE CERBERUS A MOMENT?
SHERLY HIC
YEAH? WHAT IS IT
AHEM HEM
The MUTHAWS of the WALL of TSI (DISTRICT 25)
MORE!
WHUSH TO THENK YOU (my dear) merely FAW YAW YAWZ of GRRRACEOUS GUESTHOOD..
DARLINGS!
AND WHUSH YEW A YEDDY FOHND FARE WHELL
AND.
The MUTHAWS of the WALL of TSI (DISTRICT 26)
SEMPER
BID YHEW
GLORIA
Clap.

WHELL
HALLE
COME
LUJAH
COINCIDENTALLY...
I MYSELF HAVE BEEN TRANS-FUHHED TO DISTRICT 26
SO I SHOULD BE VEDDY PLEASED TO ESCOTE YOL TO YAW NYEW
CEREBUS IS STAYING HERE
I'M AFFRAID THAT IZ QWHITE IMPOSSIBLE
QWHITE IMPOSSIBLE, MY DEAH
WITH THE RRRESIGNATIONS OF MISTAH STAHKEY AND MISTAH GEOSE--
THESE PRREMISES WILL BE CLOSED UNTIL SUCH TIME AS SYOOTABLE RUHPLACEMENTS CAN BE FOWND
♪ MMMM? ♪
♪ THAA--AT'S RIGHT ♪
SO! WITH HOUT FLUHTALK

CEREBUS
IS THE
NEW
BARTENDER
ADOS?
?
VEDDY
WELL...
MY
DEAH.
IF!
HYDO.
IN...
SIST!

COMICS AND THE MASS MEDIUM

Call it the Alexander Syndrome, the largely submerged human instinct towards world conquest. Alexander, St. Paul, Martin Luther, Hitler — each in their own ways and with individual motivations attempted to convert/conquer their "known world." Consider the Beatles, mindful of their place in the conquistador-scheme-of-things. While their music is still widely listened to and their influence in popularizing the United Kingdom and marijuana, East Indian philosophy and garish Edwardian clothing (to name four disparate elements of their influence) is undeniable, it is girlishly long hair where their conquest is indisputable. Elvis had long hair but it was not girlishly long. It was hoodlum-ishly long (to coin a word). By the standards of 1963 most men now have girlishly long hair. *That* is world conquest.

Television has conquered the known world.

Like any great conqueror, Television absorbed what it could not destroy. It absorbed Movies (please note that these media are being denoted as Proper Nouns for a reason: I am dealing with them here as manifestations, icons, philosophies, expressions of collective conscious and unconscious thought — in short, as Beings). Picture every movie ever made in one huge pile. Now, mentally divide that pile into three piles: 1) movies that are being shown in theaters around the world at the present moment (not each individual print. That would be cheating. *Every* print of *Independence Day* would be represented by *one* print of *Independence Day*), 2) movies which are warehoused by their corporate owners or are otherwise unavailable to the public, 3) every movie that is being shown on television in the next lunar cycle (since Television is the Sun and Movies are the Moon, that seems to me an appropriate time frame), every movie that is available as a videocassette, every movie available on every Pay-TV channel, every movie owned by Ted Turner.

Only Pile #1 could be properly termed Movies, and it is a very small Being as compared with Pile #3. Pile #1 exists in two forms: a handful of art-house films too small or (by Television's schoolmarmish standards) too suspect to be included in Pile #3 and whatever-else-Television-has-not-yet-absorbed-but-soon-will — that is to say, new films which have not been converted into videotapes, have not been shown on Pay-TV channels or Pay-per-View channels YET. In short, Movies are supplicants before the throne of Television.

Is *supplicant* too harsh a term? I don't think so. Consider that movies experience their debut on television in the form of saturation and super-saturation and unsaturated advertising. Movie studios render millions of dollars in "tribute" to television stations and networks in advance of a film's release. On the *Today Show*, the *Tonight Show*, *Entertainment Tonight*, et al., actors and directors plead their case to the mass conscious mind from the Faerieland box of coloured lights and sounds. It is Television that deems which of these worthies is to be granted such consideration (undoubtedly culled from a nearly infinite number of contenders). The movie then does very well financially, not so well financially, so-so financially, or bombs completely and is reincarnated into the respective Faerielands on that basis (the lands, in descending order of desirability, are: Pay-per-View, Pay-TV Channel Headliner, Pay-TV Channel Also-Ran, Advertised Video Release (TV, newspapers, radio), Advertised Video Release (newspapers, radio), Advertised Video Release, Unadvertised Video Release, and (The Horror. The Horror.) Direct-to-Video. A movie must prove itself to Television, and Television's judgement is final. That, I would maintain, is a supplicant.

Consider it another way (all you Movie snobs who are bristling at this). Let's take Humphrey Bogart as an example. Throughout his career as a component of the Being known as Movies, Bogart appeared — literally — larger than life. Projected onto a theater screen, Bogart's head would (in a close-up shot) be larger than the average basketball player. In considering the number of times Bogart will appear in this way in the next lunar cycle and comparing it to the number of times he will be appearing in miniature on television screens, there is clearly no comparison. Bogart is a Television being now far more than he is a Movie being.

Call it the Revenge of the Faeries, the Wee Folk, the Sprites, and the Pixies: tiny people who glow in the dark. You think I'm being facetious here. I'm not. What else is television-viewing, dispassionately observed, than big people who don't cast their own light watching tiny people who do? In reviewing the human history of the 20th century — which began with the Movies Being rising to prominence and which is ending with the Television Being preeminent — could it not be fairly said: "We were Giants in Those Days" and added, ruefully, "And Now We are Faeries."

The thing about world conquest is that it must be pursued to its utmost. It is in the nature of this very human instinct that enough is never, well, enough. *Carpe diem* and, for the Television Being, the day has proven to be quite a long one (for which the Television Being is grateful, for there is so MUCH to seize). The trick of course is to extend the hegemony without fundamentally altering the nature of the devouring presence (the Catholic Church was awfully good at this up to a point). Fortunately for Television, Television-as-Being amounts to a box of coloured lights and sound, an incredibly basic and, consequently, flexible nature. The transformation of Giants (Movies) into Faeries (Television) was really rather a simple trick for so flexible an entity. Conquest was inevitable at the exact moment that the first movie studio licensed the first movie for broadcast on TV. Music was also an easy

Being to co-opt — though the battle was a more protracted conflict. Already severely weakened in its Upper Genius range by the arrival of the phonograph and Movies and radio (whereby Tin Pan Alley, Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Lite, and other popular entertainments largely supplanted and displaced, radically, the significance of the Symphony and other Great Works in the awareness of the average individual), Music committed suicide as it contemplated the arrival of Television on the scene (decades of Music to be pumped through those tinny little speakers. The Horror. The Horror.) as the only honourable course left to it. Since Music is immortal it rose, phoenix-like, from its own ashes, assuming the most degraded incarnation imaginable: rock 'n' roll (it will take another one hundred years to determine whether those r's become capitalized), which had two articles of faith orbiting about its plan for survival vis-à-vis Television: Loud and Lewd. This was practical, implying to me Music's insight that Television was going to devour everything in a very short space of time (a cosmic eyeblink of a decade or two) and that its only hope lay in occupying territories anathematic to Television. The situation, of course, was Alamo-like in its one-sidedness. Music infected Television with an Elvis (elvin?) Virus — the Faerie Who Wiggled in Our Living Rooms First. The Wiggling was universally known but was not depicted (above the waist only), and Television experienced its first setback in its portrayal of itself as an Accurate Communicator. Elvis was inducted into the army, and Television warmed itself at the hearth of news footage of those lewd, greasy locks being shorn. What an experience to be that Faerie, that First Faerie. The mass unconscious mind detected a Nativity, and Elvis squirmed as the walls of blasphemy closed in upon him. I love the story of Elvis, the good southern Baptist, worriedly asking Jerry Lee Lewis if he thought newspapers and Television were right: that rock 'n' roll was the Devil's Music. Reportedly, Jerry Lee grinned and said, "Son, I think you ARE the Devil." No doubt there ensued a sleepless night behind the fabled Graceland gates.

Loud and Lewd, for a time Music managed the nearly impossible trick of governing its own domain and using Television to expand its sphere of influence. Music countered the shorn locks of the First Faerie with the girlishly coifed Beatles, a subtle chess move, indeed, Music temporarily opting for displacement from its central lands of Lewdness for the more ambiguous outback of androgyny. These boys didn't wiggle, but they did rock gently in a teasing fashion imitative of the subtlest male sexual rutting rhythms. Television missed that one completely (Television at its most adept is transparently Unsubtle, as are most conquerors, and so is unable to perceive anything which has any subtlety about it). Loud and Lewd had almost a decade of sovereignty before Television had had enough and created the Monkees (imitative creatures, monkeys), thus presenting the mass consciousness with "Beatles-minus-the-Loud-and-Lewd." John Lennon, in his own mind First Faerie to Elvis' John the Baptist Faerie, lewdly declared the Beatles more popular than Christ. Which was accurate, of course, in certain circles. What was missed in the ensuing brouhaha was that there used to be a clear demarcation between a Great and Fundamental Truth and a large popularity. Television is undoubtedly to blame for that line of demarcation being obliterated. The Alamo finally fell with the advent of MTV where, in short order, Television learned that Lewd was nothing to be feared and that sweeping vistas of the profane, the imbecilic, and the hideous could be co-opted effortlessly by stopping just this side of the Explicit. The remnants of Music huddled in the root cellar of the Alamo's smoking ruins, feeding on the thin gruel of what little Television would still not permit within its confines. Video by video those confines were expanded until even concert footage of band members spitting on their audience went from being the last allowable extreme of the Explicit to a *de rigueur* identification of genre. Expelling snot (one would suppose) is the last barricade before the metaphorically "true dead end" of nipples, vaginas, and penises (at which point Music doesn't stand a chance against Hard Core Pornography in THAT particular Video Derby).

With almost everyone going "topside" (if they let us do anything on television, what are we down here eating this thin gruel for?), what remains of Musical "Purism" divides between twin perceptions: "if it's *on* television it is no good" and "if it *isn't* on television it isn't good *enough*." In the No Man's Land between the two viewpoints those who attempt to occupy Purist territory find themselves twisting slowly in the wind as the object of their Purist affections has a "break-out, heavy rotation video" (The Horror. The Horror.) appear on the tube. Some purists scramble to safety, abandoning and seizing ever-more-esoteric and marginalised objects of veneration in their own answer to "heavy rotation" (the sort of *Cerebus* fans who would wince visibly at the list of favourite bands they had immortalized above their signatures in Aardvark Comment a few years ago); others grudgingly compromise their purism, attributing the very least level of quality to MTV-"inspired" music but still acknowledging that televised music is not inherently or implicitly bad. With MTV's foot wedged tightly in that door, *most* of the music industry has become Television's newest, albeit somewhat grudging, supplicant.

At the furthest and darkest corner of the root cellar below the smoking ruins of Music's Alamo is the truly marginalised, "lowest of the low" — Real Musicians, which is to say those musicians who produce their creative works out of the irresistible inner compulsion to do so, musicians with an understanding of and an appreciation for Music Herself (or Himself, but I'm pretty sure Music is a Female), Her rich history, and all the myriad points of large innovation which plot Her Trajectory from the folk ballad to the madrigal to the symphony to jazz, etc., etc. Most, if not all, of these individuals resemble the Real Comic-Book Creator in their sensibility — Dan Clowes picking from the smorgasbord of his chosen medium's stylists, innovators, pioneers, and touchstones. Kurtzman looms large within the confines of his work. Ketcham gets more than a passing nod. Like the musician at the outer

reaches of *his* field (the outer reaches, post-1950s, being any creative field's territory at the greatest remove from Television), his work is sustained by a small but devoted band of followers. His fortunes rise and fall and rise again and fall again. "Lot of folks here tonight" consisting in equal measure of the pleasing moment ("Nice to have a lot of folks here tonight"), rueful retrospect ("Weren't a lot of folks here *last* night"), and cheerful fatalism ("Might not be a lot of folks here *tomorrow* night"). Such a musician might watch MTV from time to time, but his (or her) relation to it would be comparable to Dan Clowes watching *The Simpsons*. It is possible to enjoy it or not enjoy it for what it is, but the reaction is completely divorced from any kind of identification (except for the less-distant relation between *Eightball* and Groening's *Life in Hell*, say) or (perish the thought) envy. For *that* creative personality, television is just the same dime bag of heroin that it is for any other individual in the waning hours of the 20th century — to succumb to or resist or work around, depending on how strong or how weak the individual's flesh and spirit are at the time.

To Television's Legion of Junkies this appears as affectation and has the stink of the poseur about it. One is viewed by the Legion of Junkies as being either *afraid* of one's best efforts being *rejected* by Television (cast down from the Hollywood Hills, as it were) or *brave* and *heroic*, staring down the Devil and his temptations, or simply *inadequate* to Television's high purpose (a thoroughgoing junkie is always going to see high purpose in his drug of choice). In those territories where music and the comic-book field most resemble each other (really, the *only* place where they *do* resemble each other — contrast *Superman's Wedding Album* and a Rolling Stones concert at the "high end" of commercial application), there is nothing of fear, bravery, or inadequacy. The musician creates his or her music and that's all. The comic-book creator creates his or her comic book and that's all. Everything else is just, well, everything else. And that — inexplicable as it might be to the Legion of Junkies (and inexplicable it is) — includes Television. Mercifully, I am now done considering Television at close proximity (apart from the footnote on Those Foolish Computers which follows this installment — subtitled Scott McCloud, God Bless 'Im, Is a Big Weenie).

In the next installment: Where Television has Skewed the Comic-Book Field.

footnote

THOSE FOOLISH COMPUTERS

Computers, to me, are Television's desperate attempt to extend its hegemony to characteristically absurdist extremes. The most heavily addicted of its Legion of Junkies (hooked on television's smack from birth) really see the Internet and related cyberspace environments as the wave of the future. Not content with its virtually universal dominance of human society, Television now deludes itself that it is time to eliminate Print and put Print on Television. Where Television is the central fact of existence to the exclusion of everything that *isn't* Television (people who don't read books or newspapers, see plays, watch live sports, or play sports — which is to say everywhere), nothing could be more sensible than to put everything on television. If you can slip on a helmet and walk down the Champs Elysées, why pay for a plane ticket and hotel? As the technology develops, why *listen* to the Beatles' music or *read a book* about the Beatles when you can just slip on your helmet and *be* one of the Beatles? Performing at Shea Stadium while your cyber gloves pick out the chords to "I Feel Fine." I think I'll be John tonight. Feel Paul's sweat and spittle striking your face as you do the harmonies. Grin back at Ringo. Run across the infield to deafening applause (crank the applause to 11 if you want).

As the saying goes, for those who like that sort of thing, that's just the sort of thing they will like. To me, this is lotus-eating deserving of proper noun status: Lotus-Eating.

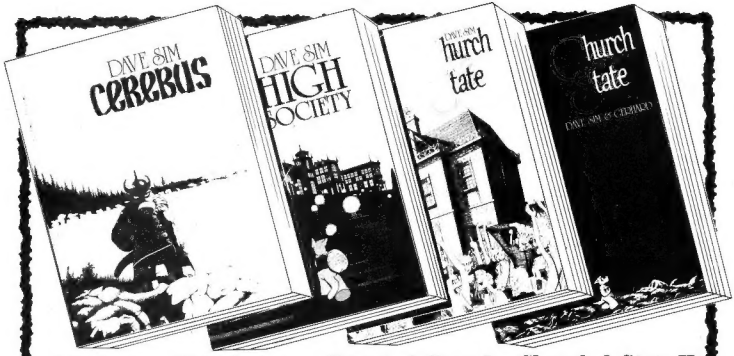
Television is pixilated. Computer screens reproduce images in such a way that the images are comparable to typewriter pictures of presidents. You type ten X's, five commas, twelve X's, and so on, line by line, and when you've followed the instructions to the letter (sorry), voilà, it's a picture of George Washington. When it's placed next to a computer-generated image of George Washington the, difference, to me, is one of the smallest shading of difference. An original line drawing of the least complexity (say, a Schulz *Peanuts* strip) in its original printed form and on a computer has much in common with the difference between a straight razor, and an electric razor. However thin the screen is on an electric razor, it is still a screen and consequently provides inadequate results. If you're going to shave, shave.

Whenever I have seen original oil paintings (the Impressionists are favourites) at a gallery, I always think that I will pick up a poster of one of the paintings. Then I look at the poster with its state-of-the-art, 10,000-colour, computer-generated, layered separations, and it is so...feeble, such a withered shadow of the actual painting, that I can't bring myself to purchase it. I have nothing but pity for people who call up on a screen a postage-stamp-sized copy of every painting currently being exhibited at the Louvre and convince themselves that they are experiencing the pictures in any meaningful sense of the word "experience."

Greatly amused pity, mind you, but pity nonetheless.

And — relative to the comic-book field — that's all I have to say about computers.

Scott? I love you, man, but you're a Big Weenie.



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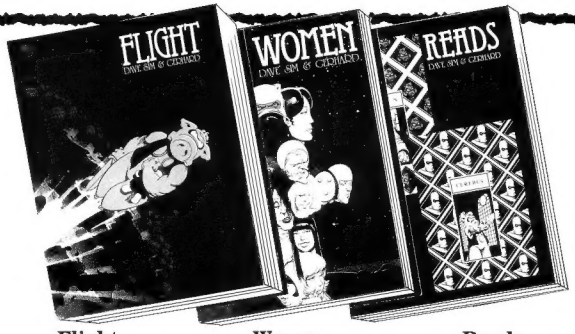

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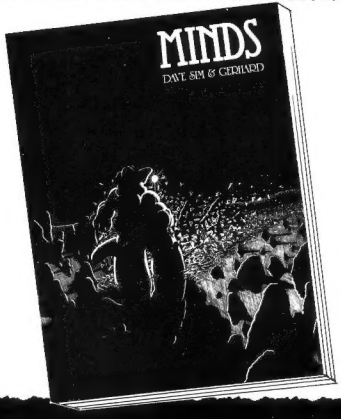

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